

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently amended) A method comprising:
 - associating a first user with a first user ID;
 - associating an instant message with the first user ID;
 - associating an image with the first user ID;
 - causing the instant message to be communicated to the first user from a second user based on the first user ID; and
 - causing the image to be communicated to the first user from the second user based on the first user ID;

wherein the first user is able to receive both the instant message and image from the second user, the image being communicated at a frame rate and at an image quality, at least one of said frame rate and said image quality being based upon conditions of a communication path between said first user and said second user, said frame rate being scalable in accordance with a number of dropped frames depending on whether a previous image has been received; and wherein said frame rate being scalable in accordance with a number of dropped frames comprises said frame rate being scalable at least in part by dropping at least some frames such that said dropped frames are not sent to said first user.
2. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the second user uses a broadcaster computer and the first user uses a first viewer computer, the method further comprising:
 - receiving a request to initiate one or more server connections between the broadcaster computer and the first viewer computer, the connections for passing the image;
 - facilitating a peer-to-peer connection between the broadcaster computer and the first viewer computer, the peer-to-peer connection for passing the image; and
 - facilitating communication of the image over the peer-to-peer connection instead of the server connections, thereby conserving bandwidth of the servers.

3. (Original) The method of claim 2, further comprising:
receiving control data for the image from the broadcaster computer.
4. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 2, wherein a third user uses a second viewer computer, further comprising, after passing the image from the broadcaster computer to the first viewer computer:
passing a request to view the image from a second viewer computer to the broadcaster computer; and
facilitating the reestablishing of a first server connection between the broadcaster computer and the first viewer computer for passing the image in response to receiving the second viewer computer request; and
facilitating a second server connection between the broadcaster computer and the second viewer computer for passing the image, thereby permitting both the first viewer computer and the second viewer computer to receive the image.
5. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein the reestablishing is in response to the broadcaster computer receiving approval from the second user.
6. (Original) The method of claim 5, wherein the third user is on an approved list.
7. (Original) The method of claim 4, further comprising:
maintaining the peer-to-peer connection during existence of the server connection to the second viewer computer;
terminating the second server connection; and
facilitating the passing of the image over the peer-to-peer connection in response to termination of the second server connection.
8. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
associating a second user ID with the second user;

wherein causing the instant message to be communicated to the first user is further based on the second user ID.

9. (Currently amended) A method comprising:

initiating one or more server connections between a broadcaster computer and a first viewer computer via one or more application servers, the connections for passing an image and an instant message, the image being communicated at a frame rate and at an image quality, at least one of said frame rate and said image quality being based upon conditions of a communication path between said first viewer computer and said broadcaster computer, said frame rate being scalable in accordance with a number of dropped frames depending on whether a previous image has been received; received, wherein said frame rate being scalable in accordance with a number of dropped frames comprises said frame rate being scalable at least in part by dropping at least some frames such that said dropped frames are not sent to said first viewer computer;

receiving an indication to establish a peer-to-peer connection between the broadcaster computer and the first viewer computer, the peer-to-peer connection for passing the image; and

routing the image over the peer-to-peer connection instead of the server connections, thereby conserving bandwidth of the servers.

10.(Original) The method of claim 9, wherein the server connections with the application servers are for passing control data for the image.

11. (Original) The method of claim 10, wherein the server connections are further for passing an instant message.

12. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11, further comprising, after routing the image over the peer-to-peer connection:

receiving a request from a second viewer computer to view the image; and

in response to receiving the second viewer computer request, reestablishing a first server connection between the broadcaster computer and the first viewer computer for passing the image; and

establishing a second server connection between the broadcaster computer and the second viewer computer for passing the image, thereby permitting both the first viewer computer and the second viewer computer to receive the image.

13. (Original) The method of claim 12, wherein the reestablishing is in response to the broadcaster computer receiving approval from a broadcasting user of the broadcaster computer.

14. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein the user of the second viewer computer is on an approved list.

15. (Original) The method of claim 12, further comprising:

maintaining the peer-to-peer connection during existence of the second server connection to the second viewer computer;

detecting termination of the second server connection; and

automatically rerouting the image over the peer-to-peer connection in response to termination of the second server connection.

16. (Original) The method of claim 15, wherein the server connections are used for passing instant messages.

17. (Withdrawn) A method for communicating a series of images from a broadcaster computer to a first viewer computer, the method comprising:

initiating one or more server connections between the broadcaster computer and the first viewer computer via one or more application servers, the connections for passing the series of images;

routing a first image of the series of images over the server connections from the broadcaster computer to the first viewer computer; and

routing a second image of the series of images over the server connections from the broadcaster computer to the first viewer computer upon receiving an indication that the first viewer computer received the first image.

18. (Withdrawn) A method for communicating an image from a broadcaster computer to one or more viewer computers, the method comprising:

initiating one or more server connections between the broadcaster computer and the first viewer computer via one or more application servers, the connections for passing the series of images;

identifying a capacity value of the server connections; and

routing an image over the server connections from the broadcaster computer to the viewer computers if the total capacity of the server connections to the viewer computers is less than the capacity value.

19. (Currently amended) A method comprising:

receiving a request to initiate one or more server connections between a broadcaster computer and a first viewer computer, the connections for passing an image and an instant message, the image being communicated at a frame rate and at an image quality, at least one of said frame rate and said image quality being based upon conditions of a communication path between said first user and said second user, said frame rate being scalable in accordance with a number of dropped frames depending on whether a previous image has been received; received, wherein said frame rate being scalable in accordance with a number of dropped frames comprises said frame rate being scalable at least in part by dropping at least some frames such that said dropped frames are not sent to said first viewer computer;

facilitating a peer-to-peer connection between the broadcaster computer and the first viewer computer, the peer-to-peer connection for passing the image; and

facilitating communication of an image over the peer-to-peer connection instead of the server connections, thereby conserving bandwidth of the servers.

20. (Original) The method of claim 19, further comprising:

receiving control data for the image from the broadcaster computer.

21. (Original) The method of claim 20, further comprising:
 - passing an instant message from the broadcaster computer to the first viewer computer.
22. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 19, further comprising, after passing the image from the broadcaster computer to the first viewer computer:
 - passing a request to view the image from a second viewer computer to the broadcaster computer; and
 - facilitating the reestablishing of a first server connection between the broadcaster computer and the first viewer computer for passing the image in response to receiving the second viewer computer request; and
 - facilitating a second server connection between the broadcaster computer and the second viewer computer for passing the image, thereby permitting both the first viewer computer and the second viewer computer to receive the image.
23. (Original) The method of claim 22, wherein the reestablishing is in response to the broadcaster computer receiving approval from a broadcasting user of the broadcaster computer.
24. (Original) The method of claim 23, wherein the user of the second viewer computer is on an approved list.
25. (Original) The method of claim 22, further comprising:
 - maintaining the peer-to-peer connection during existence of the server connection to the second viewer computer;
 - terminating the second server connection; and
 - facilitating the passing of the image over the peer-to-peer connection in response to termination of the second server connection.

26. (Original) The method of claim 25, further comprising:
passing instant messages between the broadcaster computer and the first viewer computer.

27. (Currently amended) A method comprising:
passing a first image of a series of images from a broadcaster computer to a first viewer computer;
detecting an indication from the first viewer computer as to whether the first image has been received; and
passing a second image of the series of images if the first image has been received,

wherein the second image is passed at a frame rate, said frame rate being scalable in accordance with a number of dropped frames depending on said indication, wherein said frame rate being scalable in accordance with a number of dropped frames comprises said frame rate being scalable at least in part by dropping at least some frames such that said dropped frames are not sent to said first viewer computer.

28. (Withdrawn) A method for passing an image from a broadcaster computer to one or more viewer computers over one or more server connections, the method comprising:
detecting a capacity of each of the server connections;

determining the total capacity of the server connections;
passing the image from the broadcaster computer to the viewer computers only if the total capacity of the server connections is less than a predetermined capacity value of the server connections.